

# Climate Change and Cultural Resources



Preserving and Protecting  
Parks, people, traditionally associated communities  
and tangible/intangible resources

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# What is at stake?



- ❧ Cultural resources and the people, parks, traditionally associated communities, visitors, and park personnel impacted by changes in land mass availability/ accessibility, shifts in stability and distribution or even loss of critical resources including transportation, shelter, burial/sacred grounds, and subsistence options influenced by climate change.

# Vulnerable Communities



☞ The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage corridor is home to one of the country's most unique cultures, a tradition first shaped by captive Africans brought to the southeastern United States from the primarily rice-producing regions of West and Central Africa. That culture continues today by their descendants, known as Gullah Geechee people.



**"We Must Preserve and Protect  
Gullah Geechee Culture"**

**South Carolina Congressman James E. Clyburn**



# Where



# Where



✧ The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor is a federally designated National Heritage Area. It encompasses a cultural and linguistic area along the southeastern coast of the United States from the northern border of Pender County, North Carolina to the southern border of St. Johns County, Florida and 30 miles inland. The land mass of this area, which is included in the Southern Atlantic Coastal Plain and the 79 barrier islands that hug the coast, encompass approximately 12,818 square miles, an area larger than the states of Maryland and Delaware combined.

# Culturally significant resources

## Behavior Cemetery - Sapelo, Island, Georgia



Only known remaining Gullah Geechee burial ground contained within a slave settlement on Sapelo Island. Behavior Cemetery represents African burial customs. The oldest grave is dated 1890. Residents attest to hundreds of unmarked graves that existed prior to a devastating hurricane in 1898. The cemetery has been in continuous use by the community for over 120 years. It has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places since 1996 (Cyriaque 2010).

# Vulnerable Resources



## What to Do When Disaster Strikes Historic Cemeteries or Culturally Significant Resources?

Planning is needed to help communities mitigate risks to cultural resources as a result of climate change influences.

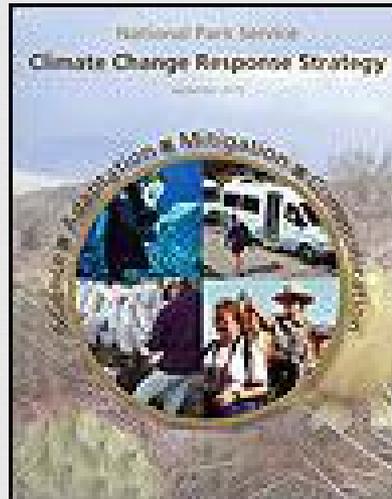


Trees downed by a tornado in Raleigh, North Carolina cause damage to historic grave markers in City Cemetery. Courtesy: City of Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department.

# NPS Response



- ❧ The NPS *Climate Change Response Strategy* provides direction to our agency and employees for addressing and lessening the effects of climate change.



# Planning for preserving and protecting cultural resources – steps/methods



- ❧ Research/consult across regions; across disciplines; and across agencies (i.e., NCPTT-National Center for Preservation, Technology and Training; SEAC, SERO)
- ❧ Assess what works great and identify/critique great gaps
- ❧ Inventory Cultural Resources and assess implications/impact of climate change
- ❧ Identify needs of people and associated communities and assess implications/impact of climate change

# Planning for Climate Change Applying the Ethnographic Method



Ethnography as a way of Seeing

“The important question is not whether ethnography is feasible in a particular instance but whether and how cultural interpretation might enhance understanding of the topic or problem under investigation” —  
*Ethnography: A Way of Seeing* by: Harry F. Wolcott (2008:73)

# Applying Ethnography



- ☞ All the ways one may direct attention while in the field (working in community and away from the office)
- ☞ Multiple techniques/"multi-instrument" approach
- ☞ Participant Observation-interviewing-archival research
- ☞ Experiencing-Enquiring-Examining
- ☞ Examining data about the everyday acts and actions of people; uncovering intimate knowledge about people in material records (diaries, photographs, letters, oral histories, artifacts, museum collections, buildings) and cultural/natural landscapes

—see: *Ethnography: A Way of Seeing* by: Harry F. Wolcott (2008)

# Applying Ethnography



- ❧ Learn culture by observing people and making inferences
  - ❧ From what people say (how they talk-- word choice, usage and meanings)
  - ❧ From the way they act (rituals, traditions, daily activities)
  - ❧ From material culture and artifacts that people use
  - ❧ From the way people engage with natural resources or have engaged with the land, natural resources, and changing environmental conditions historically/ traditionally

# Applying Ethnography



- ❧ Bring clarity to a problem/define a problem (such as early stages of research; when something new has been introduced; when there are contested resources/multiple interests)
- ❧ Address/inform complex problems
- ❧ Better understand an existing problem/program/institution/situation

# SERO

## Cultural Resources program



- ❧ Cultural Resources Division (Atlanta, GA)
  - ❧ Historic Architecture
  - ❧ History
  - ❧ Museum Services
  - ❧ Cultural Landscapes
  - ❧ Ethnography
- ❧ Southeast Archaeological Center (SEAC), Tallahassee, FL
  - ❧ NAGPRA Coordinator

# Contact Information



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**Recognizing people and associated communities as key cultural resources in planning studies/reports, assessments, and preservation, conservation, and heritage tourism/visitor experience initiatives**